

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:20 p.m. on April 14 in the Rayburn Room at the Atlanta Airport Hilton and Towers in Atlanta, GA, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 15. The transcript was

made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 14 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Beverly Hills, California *April 15, 2000*

The President. Thank you very much. Well, first of all, let me say that this is an easier speech for me to give than the one the Vice President just gave, because I'm not running for anything. [Laughter] So I was thinking, well, what should I say? And I asked Al, I said, "Is there anything special you want me to say?" He said, "Nothing special; just get up there and say, 'Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Roosevelt, Gore.'" [Laughter]

I actually—and I will proceed to tell you why I actually think that's not an unrealistic litany there. Let me also say that the—

The Vice President. Note the amendment that I came back to you.

The President. He said, "Oh yeah, put Clinton in there somewhere." [Laughter] Actually, you know, I've gotten so gray, I tried to get Jay Leno to come in and give the speech tonight, but he turned me down. [Laughter]

I wanted to say to you that—I really, our friends over here in the media, they do a good job of covering this Presidential campaign. But they are obsessively interested to find even the slightest difference of opinion between the Vice President and me. And I discovered another one just tonight, when he was up here bragging on "American Beauty." Now, I loved "American Beauty." I love Kevin Spacey. I actually liked "Howard the Duck." [Laughter] And I just, you know, in the spirit of full disclosure, I thought I ought to make it. [Laughter]

I want to thank David and Steven and Jeffrey and Marilyn, Andy, and all the DreamWorks folks and all of you who are here tonight. I talked to Hillary right before I came in here, and she said to tell you all hello. And many of you have helped her, and I thank you, those of you who have done that, for doing so.

I want to thank you for helping me and Al and Tipper before, and in this election. And

I want to be brief, because I know you want to hear Sarah sing, and I do, too. But there are a couple of things that I can say that I think are meaningful.

It seems impossible to me that it's just 2 weeks away from—or 6 weeks away, excuse me—from 8 years ago, from June 2d, 1992, when I won the primary in California and knew I would be the Democratic nominee. And then it's 12 weeks away from the time when Al and Tipper and Hillary and I were in New York, 8 years ago, and we started this long odyssey together, got on a bus and started one of our bus tours.

Today I got up at 5:15 and went into the Sequoia National Forest to make the Grand Sequoia National Monument, to protect the remaining 34 groves of sequoia trees for all time to come. Now, that sort of thing I got to do today because Al's running, and I have more time to do those things. [Laughter] But it's the sort of thing we have done. We have now set aside more land under national monuments, the Clinton/Gore administration has, than anyone. I just loved it. So I want to say, first of all, thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve, to make a difference. Because if it hadn't been for our friends in California, and particularly for a lot of people in this room, I am not sure we could have done it.

I thank you for the support you are giving to the Vice President and Tipper tonight and for our party. I'm very grateful for all the leaders, present and past, of the national Democratic Party who are here. And I just want you to think about three or four things real briefly.

First of all, when Al and Tipper and Hillary and I moved to Washington to the White House, to the Vice President's residence, we really did have a different idea about the way the country ought to work. We had a vision

of an America in which every responsible citizen had opportunity without regard to their income or background, in which every law-abiding citizen was part of one American community in a 21st century world growing closer together, not further apart, where America was the central force for peace and freedom and prosperity. That's what we believed we had to do.

And to get there, we thought we needed a unifying and forward-looking set of initiatives. Now, Al talked about that. The record speaks for itself. What I want to say to you is—notwithstanding the fact that I'm not running and, therefore, more prone to look backward than forward—that is, after all, what you hired us to do. When you hire a President and a Vice President, you hire them to win for America.

And America is always about tomorrow. And I want you to know that even though I am not on the ballot, in many ways the election of 2000 is more important than the elections of 1992 and 1996. Why do I say that? Because we have worked so hard to turn this country around and get it going in the right direction. And we are now at a point where as a people we could literally make the future of our dreams for our children—the stuff that the Vice President was talking about.

We could finally prove forever we could grow the economy and make the environment better. We could have universal preschool, universal access to college, and 21st century schools in between. We could really help people to balance work and family in ways that are not possible today. We could do more than we could possibly imagine today to make globalization and high technology work for ordinary people, not just the people that are paying to be here tonight but the people that served our meal as well.

And it all turns on this election. And the truth is, this election ought not to be close. And the only reason it is, is that elections are about more than records, qualifications, and issues, and because people sometimes lose their concentration when times are good.

I like the way things are going in this country now, but I'm telling you, things could be a lot better. Things could be a lot better, but only if we build on the platform that we're standing on right now. That's the first thing I ought to say. In the 2000 election, if you like the fact that the country's been turned around, you have to believe that the 2000 election is just as impor-

tant, if not more important, than the two that preceded it.

The second thing I want to say is—the Vice President can't say all the things he ought to say about himself. But in the entire history of the United States, no one who has ever served in that position has had remotely as much positive impact on America, as Vice President, as Al Gore has. Not even close.

And I was thinking about—he talked about all the hard decisions. I can still remember every conversation we ever had at our weekly lunch where he would say, "You know, I don't know how you're going to make these decisions, but I'm quite sure that decisionmaking involves some sort of mental and emotional muscle. It's just like working out. And the more hard decisions you make, the easier they'll get. So you've just got to jump off the board, decide what's right, and do it."

And when we made the decision to take on the budget deficit and we knew we could risk political destruction for it—because everybody in the other party opposed us—he was right there early. We made the decision to take on the gun lobby in a systematic way for the first time in history, to take on the tobacco lobby, to take on the unpopular issues of Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo. He was there, always there, always early.

Yesterday the Russian Duma ratified START II, the nuclear arms reduction treaty, which will now enable us both to dramatically reduce our nuclear arsenals, in no small measure because he has managed a major part of our relations with Russia for 8 years now. And we just recently saw the announcement coming out of Detroit that we're going to have cars before you know it making 70 or 80 miles a gallon, running on dual-fuel cells. He has managed our partnership for new generation vehicles for almost 7 years now.

We have the smallest Federal Government in 40 years because he ran our reinventing Government program. I'm going to have this conference on the digital divide, starting in East Palo Alto, Monday. When we became President and Vice President, only about 3 percent of our classrooms were connected to the Internet. Today, over two-thirds are, thanks to the fact that he has led our effort to connect the schools and to give rates that the schools could afford, even the poorer schools.

So we are friends, and I am biased. But what I just gave you are not my opinions but facts. So, number one, it's an important election. Number two, I'm worried because people sometimes lose their concentration when times are good. Number three, he is the most qualified person in my lifetime to seek this job, I believe.

And the final thing I want to tell you is this: There are big differences. You know what they are. But if someone were to ask me to go back over the last 8 years and to look ahead to the next 8 years and say, "Well, what is the most important thing of all?" I would say, the most important thing of all is for us to keep striving to be one America. That's why I have worked so hard to try to help end the racial and religious and ethnic and tribal wars of the world, that the United States has tried to be a force for peace all over the world. That is why we have worked so hard for the hate crimes bill, the "Employment Non-Discrimination Act," an end to racism, equal pay for women, all those things—because the American people are really smart. And if they can be free of the demons that bedevil people all over the world, we are going to do just fine.

I was in Atlanta the other night to celebrate John Lewis—Congressman John Lewis' 60th birthday. We were reliving the 35th anniversary of the march at Selma. And I was talking about John and how the most important thing that he did was not just to win the passage of the civil rights laws but to lead a movement to forgive everybody that had oppressed him, and in so doing, to liberate us.

You know, we are all—all of us are guilty from time to time of defining our importance in life with some negative reference to somebody else—"I had a bad day, but at least I'm not them. On my worst day, I would never do that and be like them." Not a person hasn't done that. But at least we've never made a political program of it in our party, and I'm proud of that. And I'm proud of being a Democrat.

So you've got the best qualified person. You heard him go through the issues, and you agree with him on the issues. We've got great people running for the House and Senate, one of whom I have a particular interest in. *[Laughter]* But you have to believe in the larger issue. You've got the chance to build the future of your dreams for your children and your grandchildren, because of the conditions that exist

in this country today. Therefore, this election is as important, maybe more important than the two that came before it.

And I'll leave you with this story. Al talked about it a little in his remarks. When we celebrated, in February, the longest economic expansion in American history, we got the economic team in. Everybody is patting themselves on the back, you know, and we were all feeling like we were smarter than we probably are. And I said, "Well, when was the last longest economic expansion in history?" You know when it was? Nineteen sixty-one to 1969, when we were young people.

I graduated from high school in 1964. President Kennedy had been killed. The country united behind Lyndon Johnson. Inflation was low; unemployment was low; growth was high; productivity was booming. Optimism was rampant. Lyndon Johnson was clearly going to be reelected. And even though there was a serious civil rights challenge, we—basically, most people I knew felt it would be solved in the Congress and the courts with peaceful demonstrations. Even though we were sort of involved in Vietnam, no one I knew at that time thought it would tear the country to shreds. And everybody was just pretty casual about where we were, and we just took our prosperity for granted, and we thought we could get rid of poverty and everything else without a great deal of effort and concentration.

Four years later I graduated from college in Washington, DC, 2 days after Robert Kennedy was murdered, 2 months after Martin Luther King was murdered, 9 weeks after Lyndon Johnson said he couldn't run for President again because the country was ripped right down the middle over Vietnam. We had riots in the streets, and within just a few months after the 1968 election, the longest economic expansion in history was history.

I say that not to be a downer, because I am probably the most optimistic person, congenitally, maybe even naively, and more optimistic than I was the day I became President. But I say that to remind you. We dare not break our concentration or relax our commitment just because times are good.

And forget about being President, I say this to you as a citizen: I have waited for 35 years for my country once again to be in the position it was in when I was young, to build the future of our dreams for our children.

That's what this election is about. That's why he should be President. You will never get a chance in your lifetime to vote for someone as well-qualified again. I certainly wasn't when I ran. You will never get a chance in your lifetime to ratify a direction and to accelerate the pace of change that is clearly working.

If you really think about it, you are not ever going to have any clearer choices. But when you think it doesn't matter, when you get tired, when you wish somebody wouldn't call you again between now and November, you remember the story I told you about the last longest economic expansion in American history, and

take a deep breath and bear down, because the best is still ahead of us.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 10:15 p.m. on the terrace at Historic Greystone Mansion. In his remarks, he referred to "Tonight Show" host Jay Leno; actor Kevin Spacey; founders Steven Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg, and David Geffen, and Chief of Corporate Affairs Andy Spahn, DreamWorks SKG Studios; Mr. Katzenberg's wife, Marilyn; and musician Sarah McLachlan. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Gore.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the Community in East Palo Alto, California April 17, 2000

The President. Good morning. I want to thank Mayor Wilson for making us welcome today. And thank you, Magda Escobar, for all you have done. I also want to recognize some other people who are here with us today. Reverend Jackson, thank you for coming. Carly Fiorina, the president of Hewlett-Packard; and Robert Knowling, the president of Covad, thank you for being here. Rebecca Lobo, thank you for being here. We're glad to see you.

I'd like to also acknowledge the presence in the audience of Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Andrew Cuomo; the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, Bill Kennard; and many Members of Congress—Representative Zoe Lofgren, Representative John Conyers, Representative Bill Jefferson, Representative Barbara Lee, Representative Silvestre Reyes, Representative Stephanie Tubbs Jones, Representative Anna Eshoo—I think that's all the Members of Congress who are here.

I'd like to thank Gene Sperling and Maria Echaveste. And I want to recognize especially the man who helped us avoid the Y2K problem, a distinguished Republican Senator from Utah, Bob Bennett. Thank you for coming, Senator Bennett. We're glad to see you.

I'd also like to thank all the civil rights leaders who are here, the high-tech CEO's, the founda-

tion directors. And I'd like to thank Julian Lacey, who is here, for helping us kick off our national call to action for digital opportunity. I know that all of you know Julian. Thank you.

I want to thank AOL for webcasting today's event live. And I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to one person who is not here who helped us to develop our entire approach to closing the digital divide, Vice President Al Gore. I thank him as well.

Now, I will be brief because I want to get on to the questions. But I want to tell you why we're here. This is a very fortunate time for our country. We have the strongest economy in history. We have the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates our country has ever recorded and the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years. But we all know there are people and places that have not fully participated in this new economy.

I have been to a lot of those places on my digital divide tour—I mean, my new markets tours—because I see these places as places of opportunity, places of new markets. If we can create new employees, new businesses, new jobs, new opportunities, we can keep the American economy going. This is one of those fortunate times when, by doing the thing that is morally right, we actually help to keep America's economic expansion churning forward. It's going